

Book and Tract Work.

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In this number I am going to make some extracts from an article sent out some years ago, I think by the Religious Tract Society of London, England. No matter who published the article the writer understood the subject of tracts. The first paragraph was printed in the Church Members Hand-Book, and I think I printed a number for Brother Holsinger one time, and also scattered them through the church. New readers will appreciate them, and no doubt the old. The first article may take most of the t's in the printer's case, but so it takes your mind on to the subject is the point with me.

TRACTS.

"Tracts can go everywhere. Tracts never blush. Tracts know no fear. Tracts never stammer. Tracts never stick fast. Tracts never tire. Tracts never die. Tracts can be multiplied without end by the press. Tracts can travel at little expense. They want nothing to eat. They require no lodgings. They run up and down, like the angels of God, blessing all, giving to all, and asking no gift in return. You can print tracts of all sizes, on all subjects, and at all hours. And they can talk to one as well as to a multitude, and to a multitude as well as to one. They require no public room to tell their story in. They can tell it in the kitchen or the shop, the parlor or the closet, in the railway carriage or in the omnibus, on the broad highway or in the footpath through the fields; and they dread no noisy or tumultuous interruptions. They take no note of scoffs, or jeers, or taunts, or noisy folly, or malignant rage. They bear all things, suffer all things, and take no harm from anything. They can talk even when the noise is so great as to drown all other voices, and they stop when they are bid, or at least when they have done. No one can betray them into hasty or random expressions. And they will wait men's time, and suit themselves to men's occasion and conveniences. They will break off at any point, and begin at any moment where they broke off. And though they will not answer questions, they will tell their story twice or thrice, or four times over if you wish them. And they can be made to speak on every subject, and on every subject they may be made to speak wisely and well. They can, in short, be made vehicles of all truth, and teachers and reformers of all classes, and regenerators and benefactors of all lands.

TRACT SOCIETY ANNIVERSARY.

On the 9th of May, 1884, at Exeter

Hall, London The Religious Tract Society, which was instituted in 1799, held its anniversary. At that meeting Dr. Samuel G. Green, one of the secretaries, read the report of the year. The number of new tracts issued was 209, and the aggregate number of tracts circulated during the year, 30,197,350. The chairman of the meeting referred to was Sir William McArthur, and in his remarks concerning the society and its work he gave the following interesting information. Dr. McArthur was an author of note, and his works have helped the world.

AN OLD ORGANIZATION.

Dr. McArthur said: "Thursday, the 9th of May, ought always to be a memorable day in the history of the Religious Tract Society. It was on Thursday, May 9, 1799, that the very first attempt was made to form an organization in connection with the society. At 7 o'clock on the morning of that day forty gentlemen met at St. Paul's Coffee House, in St. Paul's churchyard, and there breakfasted together, and there it was that the foundations of the society were laid. One cherishes the memory of these devoted and illustrious men. Their names are still fragrant with the church of Christ, and when I mention those of George Burder, Rowland Hill, George Collison, Matthew Wilks, and Alex. Waugh, and a few others, and among the laymen, Joseph Reyner, Robert Cowie, Zachary Macaulay, and Thomas Wilson, I am sure you will feel with me that those men conferred a great service upon the church of Christ, and laid broad and deep the foundations of the Religious Tract Society.

IN GOOD COMPANY.

Some people smile with a half sneer when you talk tracts. I have had them to so treat me, but when they do I commence to "size" them up and see what their combination is. For the man who laughs at this work is ignorant of the great names that are connected with it. Some of the greatest names in church history are connected with the work of tract writing. In advocating tract work we are in good company. For proof look at the above names.

LUTHER AND TRACTS.

The writer says of Luther: "Martin Luther wrote and published no less than eleven hundred works in a few years. Most of them in small tracts or single sheets. He published at one time from two to three hundred in a single year. It was the multiplication of these tracts and books by the press, and this plentiful distribution among the multitudes that gave such tremendous force to the reformer's

principles, and shook the power of the popedom, and worked so great a reformation. More and more since Luther's day has the value of the tract as a religious servant been appreciated."

WHAT GOOD DONE.

Since the formation of the Religious Tract Society, 2,300,000,000 tracts have been sent out—nearly twice the population of the whole globe. What power for good! What sowing of precious seed! Surely all this has not fallen on the naked rock. I admire the energy shown. If a railroad was opened to Geogumi Sidns today, the fruit goods train would be the bearer of a substantial parcel from 56 Paternoster Row, addressed to some colporteur in that distant orb. F. M. Green, who I find uses the material under quotation marks says: Lecturing and preaching are great things, but they are not all. While the word was to be preached it was also written. There will never be a time "on earth" and "among men" when the living voice shall cease to have its influence and power. It can do what no tract can do; but, on the other hand, the tract can do what the human voice no matter how golden or powerful it may be can not do.

APPLICABLE TO OURSELVES.

Brother Green must be a member of the Disciple Church, no matter, what he says applies to ourselves. Hear what he says on tracts. "The Disciples have an open door that they have never entered to any creditable extent. Some little has been done, but only enough to make the contrast between what ought to have been done and what has been done look infinitely mean. Some single tracts have gone out on their mission, and I am glad to believe that no single Gospel tract shall return void to the great God. All that is true in the simplest tract must accomplish its mission, for the divine economist cannot afford to waste a grain of what is good and true and beautiful. Behind man we have God; beyond the human we have the superhuman, and nothing is without its influence in the great universe of God. These voiceless "Gospellers" have influence beyond all human computation, and a tract is just the thing for this busy age. It is an age of "tit-bits, epitomes, summaries, essences—literary Liebig's who believe in boiling down."

What we wish to do for our fellow creatures we must do first for ourselves. We can give nothing save what God has already given us. We must become good before we can make them good, and wise before we can make them wise.—Charles Kingsley.